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"The wealth of climes, where savage nations roam,
"Pillag'd from slaves to purchase slaves at home."—GOLDSMITH.

865]

[866

SUMMARY OF POLITICS.

"PERISH COMMERCE" (continued from p. 851.)—Upon this subject several letters have been addressed to me, as will have been perceived by those who have read the four last numbers of the Register, the present included. Of these letters, one, signed WROC, will be found at page 760; another, signed W. F. S. at page 853; and three in the present sheet, under the different signatures of A. B. and C. To answer the arguments and objections of several writers at the same time, some of them naturally using, in different words, the same arguments, must, as the reader will perceive, be, upon almost any subject, a work of no little difficulty, especially when it is considered, that, in their arrangement, scarcely any two will be found to have chosen the same order. Nevertheless, such is my opinion of the importance of the subject, which I have assisted in bringing before the public, that I think it a duty which I owe to my readers, to endeavour to remove all the objections, which these several writers have urged, and all the doubts which they have started, against what has been written by Mr. Spence and myself relating to the commerce of England, that is to say, *its trading connections and intercourse with foreign nations.*—These objections appear to me to be all included under the following heads: that is to say, I. respecting the time, at which we have chosen to promulgate our opinions; II. respecting the invidious distinctions said to have been made by us between persons employed in agriculture and persons employed in manufactures and commerce; III. respecting the relative importance, or value, of agriculture and manufactures; IV. respecting the basis of Mr. Spence's doctrine, to wit, that agriculture is the real and only source of all national wealth; V. respecting the wealth which the nation derives from commerce; VI. respecting the injury which would arise to the nation from a cessation of its commerce, especially as a numerous class of persons, who are engaged in manufacturing for exportation, would, by such cessation, be thrown out of employment; VII. re-

specting the effects upon the navy; VIII. respecting the necessity of luxury; IX. respecting the effects of commerce upon the civil and political liberties of England.—"Here," the reader will say, "is a table of contents to a folio volume;" and, were I, indeed, gifted with the amplifying powers of Pitt or lord Wellesley, I should not despair of spinning ten folio volumes out of such materials, the only difficulty to be apprehended, in such case, being, where to look for readers of sufficient means to purchase my work (not having, like them, a king's printer to resort to), and of sufficient leisure and patience to sift the two grains of wheat from the bushel of chaff.—The 1st objection, that is to say, *respecting the time, at which we have chosen to promulgate these opinions relative to commerce*, is one which I should not have expected to hear from any body; yet, B, in the first paragraph of his letter, says, that "to promulgate that Britain is independent of commerce, at this time, when our commerce is attacked by Buonaparte, must be of a pernicious tendency." He has not, indeed, made even an attempt to prove this by any sort of argument; and he has totally overlooked, it seems, that Mr Spence had given at large his reasons, why such a promulgation must be greatly advantageous instead of pernicious. I had added other reasons to those of Mr. Spence; and, therefore, I was not a little surprized to see a writer of some talent enter upon the dispute with a bare assertion opposed to conclusions founded upon argument, without even deigning to notice the argument. As to the point itself, it must, I think, be pretty evident to every man, that it can do no harm to promulgate opinions, tending to convince the enemy, if they have any effect at all, that what he is doing with an intention of doing us injury, will not injure us; that, if he were to succeed in annihilating our commerce, he would not have made one inch of progress in the way of subjugating our country. Suppose him to find, by experience, that he is in a fair way of accomplishing his object of destroying our commerce, and suppose him to know that we

look upon such destruction as ruinous to our power; will not his terms of peace be made accordingly? Will he not treat with us as with a town besieged, which, sooner or later, must yield? Will not the peace be what the peace of Amiens was, a capitulation? And will it not be a capitulation upon still harder terms? But, if, on the contrary, the enemy be convinced, or, if he find that we be convinced, that his war against our commerce, though it may produce partial individual distress, will, in the end render our country more powerful against her enemies and more prosperous at home; will he not be inclined to listen to terms of peace such as a powerful nation has a right to propose? Such as a nation that fears him not, and that has no reason to fear him, ought alone to submit to? The French politicians say, that we derive from the East-Indies the means of subsidizing the kings and princes of Europe; that is to say, the means of carrying on war against France upon the Continent; and, they are not much to blame for saying so, seeing that we ourselves have taught them the creed. But, if Mr. Spence and I have proved, as I think we have, that we derive no national wealth from the East Indies; that our means of carrying on war, of granting subsidies, and the like, are all derived from our land and our labour; then the French politicians will entertain no hope of conquering us by the destruction of our Indian domination; and we shall entertain no fear upon the subject. The East India Company, with their locust-like swarm of unfledged nabobs, may, indeed, derive little consolation from the conviction that England would be happier and more powerful without commerce than with it; but, it certainly will not be so with the nation at large, which must derive satisfaction at being convinced, that the means, by which the enemy is endeavouring to bring us to his feet, will do us good instead of harm, will raise us instead of sinking us. Either our opinions will be adopted, or they will not. If the latter, then they will do no harm, and the time of their promulgation is of no consequence: if the former, then, they will tend to abate the hopes, which our enemy entertains from his present attacks upon our commerce, and also to abate our fears upon that score; and, therefore, this time is better than any other, at which to promulgate such opinions. This is so obviously true, that I cannot help thinking, that my correspondent B. whose letter will be found below, must have a feeling here of a private nature; that, like the East India Company, he must per-

ceive, that, though the destruction of commerce might be a good to the nation, it would infallibly be what he would think ruin to himself. As if he had said, “What! would you, at this time, when Buona-
“parté is attacking our commerce; would you avail yourselves of this favourable
“time, to convince the people that our profitable trade is injurious to them?” I cannot say, that I much blame him. It is perfectly natural for every man to think of himself; but, being myself convinced of the truth of the opinions promulgated by me, it behoves me to point out the probable motives which lead to the opposing of those opinions.—The Hind. objection, namely, *that we have drawn invidious distinctions between persons employed in agriculture and those employed in manufactures and commerce*, is not founded in fact. My correspondent A, whose letter will be found below, says, “you will not deny, that the labourer of the plough and the loom are
“brethren of the same family.” When have I said any thing, whence such a denial could be inferred? When have I attempted to ascribe exclusive merit to persons employed in agriculture? When have I said, or insinuated, that persons employed in arts, manufactures and commerce were less to be esteemed? There are, indeed, certain descriptions of men, who have grown out of commerce as weeds grow out of a rank soil, of whom I have spoken with every mark of disrespect; but, this has been, because, from their *public* acts, it was manifest, that they were actuated by motives hostile to the happiness and honour of the country; and, in other cases, because their prosperity as necessarily implied the decline and the approaching fall of the country, as the prosperity of the fox implies the destruction of the sheep. When I reflect, I cannot say that I blame the fox; but, I would get rid of him if I could; and, in the meanwhile, it is not reasonable to expect me to speak of him in those terms, wherein I speak of the sheep. Let us suppose two men, Tom and Dick, both in the same circumstances, and each having a son. Tom destines his to follow the plough, as his fathers have done before him; but, Dick, hearing that fortunes are made in India, without care, labour, talents, or virtue of any sort, packs off his son to Bengal. Now, it is impossible for me not to speak of Tom with more respect than I do of Dick; and, it is equally impossible for me to like the son of Dick, with all his wealth, half so well as I do the son of Tom; especially when I reflect, that the latter, by his labour, or care, or talents, has

contributed towards the real wealth of the nation, while the former has been doing nothing but enriching himself out of the labour of others, those others, too, being his own countrymen, and, amongst the rest the son of Tom, who, all the while, has perceived nothing of the operation, by which a part of his earnings have been converted into parks and coaches for his old playmate.—These distinctions I cannot help making. They are naturally made in the mind of every man; and, if I am at all singular, in this respect, the singularity consists in this, that, while, from various causes, others do not utter their sentiments, I freely utter mine. But, never have I, upon any occasion, claimed exclusive merit for those who are employed in the cultivation of land, knowing, as I do, that they form not one fourth part of the nation, and knowing also, that their occupation is not less necessary than the occupations of others; that the coat is as necessary to me as the loaf, and that, once out of a state of mere nature, the weaver is as useful as the cultivator of the land.—As to Mr Spence, he has expressed himself very explicitly upon this point. “Let it not be imagined,” says he, “from any thing which has been observed, that it is meant to be inferred, that the character of a merchant, individually considered, is not as estimable and as honourable as of any other member of society. Though it is the farmer who brings into existence all wealth, and the land proprietor who dispenses the greatest share of it; yet, as the views of both are private advantage, not the public good, neither the one nor the other, is on this score entitled to any merit. Self-interest is the impulse which directs the industry of every branch of the community, and, in general, honest obedience to this guide, will most effectually promote the advantage of society.”—One of my correspondents, remonstrated with me, some time ago, as with a farmer; it may, therefore, be of use to observe here, that I am not one; that, in all likelihood, I never shall be one; and, that, of course, I am perfectly disinterested upon that score.—The IIIrd. objection, that is to say, *respecting the relative importance of the value, in a national point of view, of agriculture and manufactures*, seems to me to have originated in a misconception of what has been said by myself, and by the author from whom I have, in former articles upon this subject, so liberally quoted.—My correspondent A. asks, in his 4th paragraph: “Will any rational inquirer say, that riches, greatness, and happiness depend upon

“agriculture only? Would agriculture have made such a place as Manchester? Will you again assert, that taxes are the fruit of land and labour? Is there no fruit, or revenue, raised from the manufacture of cotton?” My correspondent B. says, in his 2d paragraph, that “agriculture itself is only a species of manufacture; that the manufacture of the spade and the plough must even precede agriculture; that nothing is more absurd, than to give one species of manufacture a preference before another; that it is evidently more advantageous to society to employ part of the people exclusively in manufactures.” In his 3d paragraph, he says, that “tools are as necessary to the husbandman as bread to the smith.” In his 5th paragraph he says, “that did we exercise every other species of manufacture, the total loss of agriculture would be of little consequence.” This last proposition is so monstrous, that I cannot bring myself to give it a serious answer; and, shall only bestow a remark or two upon the examples, quoted by B. of the Syrians, who lived in plenty upon a barren rock, and the Italians, who, if Smollet may be believed (which is not always the case), were starving amidst fields, which, to produce plentiful crops, required merely to be *scratched*. B. need not have gone to Tyre; he might have stopped at Gibraltar, where, upon a rock of sand stone, the people live in great abundance and even luxury, through the medium of commerce. But, is it commerce that *creates* what they live upon? No: it is the land and the labour of England. Some of their provisions go directly from England and Ireland in kind; others are brought from the states of Barbary, purchased there with the amount of goods made by persons who have lived upon food raised here; and, if these persons had been employed in raising food to send to Gibraltar, instead of making goods to send to Barbary, the only difference would have been, that we should have had here so many more agriculturalists and so many less manufacturers, which, as the former would have been a more hale and stout sort of men than the latter, and also less exposed to those vices, which the congregating of men never fails to produce, would have been a desirable thing, would have rendered the nation better and more powerful than it now is.—Now, to take the other propositions in their due order, when have I said, that all riches and greatness and happiness depend *solely* upon agriculture? Nowhere. I have only said, that agriculture is the only *source* of national wealth; and, I think, it is pretty

evident, that, if we had *nothing to eat*, we should soon have nothing else, in this world, at any rate.—No, agriculture, *alone*, would not have made such a place as Manchester; but, supposing such a place to be a national good (which, however, I deny), it could not have been made, unless people had first *eaten*.—I do say “again,” that taxes are the fruit of the land and labour of the nation. But, did any one, except A, imagine, that I meant agricultural labour only? I never said so; and, the coupling of the land along with the labour as a source of revenue arose from this circumstance, that the land, of itself, without any labour at all, produces many things for the subsistence of man.—There certainly is fruit, or revenue, arising from the manufacture of cotton; but, this is answered in the preceding sentence.—As to B’s saying, that the manufacture of the spade and the plough must precede agriculture, I may say, that the smith *must eat*, before he can make the spade and the plough. But, indeed, this is mere trifling; and I have given no provocation for any of these rather petulant remarks; for, I have no where given a preference to one species of labour over another; nothing so absurd ever fell from my pen, as that a part of the people ought not to be exclusively employed in manufactures; nothing so intolerably foolish, as that tools and cloths and houses were not as necessary to the husbandman as bread to the smith and the weaver and the carpenter. Nothing was ever said by me, that could have been tortured into such a meaning. The object contended for by me, was, that we stood in no need of *commerce*; and, special care has always been taken to define what I mean by that word, namely, a trade with foreign nations; and, in order to make this position clear, it was necessary to show, that our resources were within ourselves, and, in order to do that, it was necessary to trace back every species of wealth to this land, which we inhabit, and which will lose none of its qualities by the loss of commerce.—But, B, after having insisted upon what nobody denied, that manufactures and agriculture were necessary to each other, drops down upon us, all at once, with these propositions, to wit: “the relations between nations and individuals are the same: the more extensive the exchange the greater the advantage.” I should not deny the sequel, perhaps, if confined to individuals; but, I flatly deny the first proposition, opposed to which, as connected with the previous undeniable assertions of B, is every sentence and word, that I have quoted from Mr. Spence, and that I

myself have written upon the subject. Therefore, previous to the making, in answer to us, of assertions like those last quoted, B. should have made an attempt, at least, to refute our doctrine, and which attempt he has not made. The exchange between individuals is absolutely necessary to their existence; for the farmer *must* have cloths and tools and buildings, or he ceases to farm, and to live. But, is there this absolute necessity with respect to wine, tobacco, coffee, sugar, cotton, brandy, or any other thing, which we import? It is evident, that there is not; and, that, therefore, the relations between individuals and nations are *not* the same.—What B. says, in his 6th paragraph, except as far as relates to the navy, requires no answer, consisting, as it does, of mere assertions, unsupported by any shew of argument, and which assertions, if our reasoning be sound, are, of course, erroneous. I am of opinion, that, greatly to diminish our commerce, would give new life to useful industry and would cause many to labour who now live in idleness; that it must tend to elevate agriculture and every species of useful manufacture; and that it would exalt human nature itself, by banishing from amongst us a part, at least, of that effeminacy, and of those corruptions, which now issue from the metropolis and other trading places, as from another Pandora’s box, to vitiate the country. These my opinions, if unsupported by reasons, are full as good as B’s assertions; but, I have given my reasons, and of those reasons he has not attempted to show the erroneousness.—We now come to the IVth objection, to wit; *respecting the basis of Mr. Spence’s doctrine, that agriculture is the real and only source of national wealth.* This was attacked by my correspondent, WROC, whose letter will be found in page, 760. He has been answered, as to this point by my correspondent C, whose letter is contained in the present sheet, where, in the 1st and 2nd paragraph, I think, the reader will find quite enough to satisfy him upon this part of the subject.—V. *Respecting the wealth which a nation derives from foreign commerce.*—But C, who clearly enough perceives and shows, that, in the making of the coach to be used by the land-owner (See Mr. Spence, in Register, page 709), no creation of wealth would take place, yet imagines, and endeavours to prove, in his 3d, 4th, and 5th paragraphs, that, if exported by C. (who supposes himself a merchant for the purpose), and producing a profit to him, in consequence of his bringing back tea, sugar, and wine in exchange, a creation of national wealth would take place.

The case supposed is this. There is no coin nor any other representative of valuable things in the country. All is done by barter. The *Coachmaker* makes a coach for the *Landowner*, and receives 60 quarters of wheat for it. He barter another for 60 quarters to the *Merchant*, who sends it abroad and barter it for 80 quarters; and, bringing home the proceeds in wine (let us take only one article for the sake of clearness), is, of course, the richer for the operation. But, is this the case with the nation? Has its wealth been increased? C, the merchant, says, that it has; because there are clearly 20 quarters, in property of some sort, no matter what, *brought into the country*, 10 of which he expends, and 10 he has in clear profits to lay out upon objects of permanent national wealth. Observe, that it has required 10 quarters to keep himself, family, mariners, and so forth; but, he has still his ten quarters in clear profit, and thus, he says, he has caused, by his mercantile transactions, an *addition* to the *national* wealth to that amount. But, has he not stopped rather too soon in his researches? *From whom* does this profit come? Suppose he barter his wine with the *Landowner*, does not the *Landowner* give him the profit? And, that which he gains does not the *Landowner* lose just the same as in the case of the *Coachmaker* and the *Landowner*? Yes, just the same, with this exception, that the *Landowner* gets from him a perishable, not to say pernicious commodity, instead of a commodity, which, though not contributing much to national strength, is not nearly so perishable.—But, says C., the merchant, I have clearly effected a creation of national wealth, because the *Landowner* would have given 80 quarters to any foreigner for the wine. Very well, but what would that foreigner do? Why, take away a coach to the amount of 80 quarters, leaving, in the former proportion, a profit of something more than 13 quarters to the *Coachmaker*, and carrying the rest away. Well, then, says the merchant, those seventeen quarters, after keeping himself and family and paying his mercantile expences, will go to the making of houses and other objects of national wealth in his country, instead of remaining here, in my hands, to make an addition to the wealth of this. Yes, Sir, but what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. You would do the same with respect to his country. What one country got the other would lose. That you and your brother merchant would grow rich by this traffic, that your profits, drawn from the *Landowner*, would put you

upon a level with him, enable you to vie with him, and even surpass him, in riches and, in time, with the aid of taxation, make you the owner of his estate, I allow. Whether this be a good or an evil shall hereafter be discussed; but, I think, it must be evident, that neither of you can, by any of your operations, produce, in a country, whose soil affords a sufficiency of subsistence, any *addition* to the national wealth, seeing that whatever you gain, the *Landowner* (to keep up the illustration we started with) must lose.—B. says, in his 6th paragraph, that nations cannot *now* be powerful without riches. I do not very well comprehend the object of this remark; and, it appears to me to have been useless, until it was shown, that our doctrine, respecting national wealth, was not sound. Nations *never* could be powerful without riches; but, power is a relative quality; and we contend, that commerce does not add to our national riches.—“What great sums,” exclaims A. in his 4th paragraph, “have been raised from the market of America and Africa! And who will say, that the foreign consumer does not contribute to our taxes.” I have shown, page 821 and 822 of the present volume, that it is but a trifle comparatively speaking, that is raised, upon the whole, through the custom house, and that that is raised upon ourselves. To make this matter a little plainer, suppose woollen cloth to the amount of a hundred pounds, prime cost, to be exported to America, and a return to be made in tobacco. The exporter gets, for his hundred pounds worth of cloth, as much tobacco as he sells in England for three hundred pounds; but, of this three hundred, one hundred and eighty is paid at the custom house in duty. And do not we, who consume the tobacco pay, in the end, the whole of the three hundred pounds? This is a pretty way of making foreigners contribute to our taxes! This is the way of “raising taxes from the American market,” and this answer will, I hope, serve for all the rest. But, A will say, perhaps, that he does not mean woollens, which are not taxed here, but *cottons*, which are taxed here, and which are exported, after they have paid the tax in England. This would be a very ingenious way of raising taxes upon foreigners; but, besides, that, if carried to any length, competition must very soon render it abortive, the exporter must bring back goods surpassing in amount the cottons exported, which goods are taxed at the custom-house; so that, in the end, we pay all the taxes imposed, upon the exported as well as the imported goods.—The VI.

objection, which is suggested by W. F. S. in page 855, *relates to the throwing out of employment, a great number of persons, who now find employment through the means of commerce.* An answer to this objection will, I think, be found, in the preceding number of the Register, from page 835 to page 839 inclusive; and, I am not without some hope, that, if W. F. S. had read those pages (indeed he could not, for they appeared in the same sheet with his excellent letter), he would have been nearly satisfied upon this point. But, there is one error of his, which I am certain he will thank me for correcting, and the correcting of which will, I am disposed to think, remove all his apprehensions upon this score. He thinks it probable, that the number of persons, thrown out of employment by a stoppage to all export of manufactures, would be *four or five millions*, and that all these would be added to the present lamentable list of mendicants. Were this the case; were there any such probability, I should not, I hope, ever have uttered, with satisfaction, the words “*perish commerce!*” The fact is this, that of the 10,942,646 persons of which the population of Great Britain consists, there are only 2,136,726, employed in *trade, manufactures, and handicraft*, including observe, not only the actual workers, but their *wives and children also*. Now, then, go into any village or town, look about you, see how many persons there are employed as smiths, carpenters, bricklayers, masons, tailors, shoemakers, wheel-wrights, mill-wrights, and so forth; then deduct these, together with all the persons employed *in trade for home consumption*; do this, and you will find, that the population employed in manufactures for exportation is a mere trifle compared with the whole population. Observe, that all the grocers, all the linen and woollen drapers, all the *shop keepers*, in short of every description are included. I could *prove* this from the returns given of twenty inland towns and villages that I am intimately acquainted with. The population of the village of Botley, for instance, is stated at a total of 614, and the number of persons chiefly employed in trade, manufactures and handicraft is stated at 420, when there is not one man, woman, or child employed in any thing relating to manufactures, nor to foreign trade, except, perhaps, about a dozen men, who make, in the coppice-cutting season, hoops for the West Indies, there to be used in making sugar and rum casks. This is a strong instance to be sure; but, in looking at the returns of all the villages that I am well acquainted with, there are many persons put down un-

der the head above-mentioned, though in scarcely any one of these villages is there a single person whose employment arises from commerce, by which I always mean, trade with foreign nations. I have made an average of ten villages and two towns of this description, and, I find, that the numbers, thus returned, make a *sixth* part of their *whole population*. Supposing this to be the case all over the kingdom; and, I dare say it is, for it is the invariable custom to call shop-keepers *trades-people*, the fact will appear to be, that, out of a population of nearly eleven millions, there are not above 1,400,000, including the wives and children, employed in *manufactures and merchandize*; subtract from these five sevenths, at least, employed in *manufacturing for home consumption*, and there are, including merchants and their wives and children, 400,000 persons subsisting through the medium of *commerce*, instead of the *four or five millions*, supposed by W. F. S. so to be subsisting. Indeed, one has but to think for a moment to be convinced, that this must be the case; for, how numerous are our mutual wants; how vast this field of employment amongst ourselves; and, what could become of goods if *millions* were employed in making them to be put into ships? How seldom, comparatively speaking, do we see a manufactory, if we travel through the *whole* of England? The truth is, that manufacturers, like merchants, *congregate*, those who congregate always appear the most numerous, while those who estimate are too often, indeed almost always, guided by that appearance. We hear, too, of Sir Robert Peele with his thousands of spinners; of some other great manufacturer with his thousands; then we are told of Manchester and Birmingham; and then, totally forgetting home consumption, we cry out, “such is the effect of commerce, and, if commerce go, all these persons are starved.” But, above all, we forget how long it is before thousands amount to millions, and how trifling every single description of persons is, compared to that mass which constitutes a nation.—Pitt, whose glory it was to extend our commerce, added more than 400,000 to the list of our paupers: but, I cannot coolly look forward to such an addition; and, I have endeavoured to shew, in the pages above referred to, that there would not, upon a general scale, be any considerable addition to the paupers, or, at least, to the poor-rates. Commerce can not go *all at once*. One branch would die at a time. Manufacturers would first *cease to increase*; those who were but in their be-

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ginning would turn from that employment to others; others would open almost as soon as the old ones were closed; and remember, that there are in the 400,000 more than 200,000 of children who have scarcely any employment, for all are included, down to the very cradle.—Is this not, then, a bugbear? And is it not painful to hear men of real talents, like W. F. S., expressing alarm for the fate of a country like this at the prospect of a loss of her commerce! Let the hood-winked follower of the Pitts and the Roses suck in the deception, that it is commerce which maintains our fleets and our armies and pays the interest upon the enormous debt which prodigality and corruption have created; but, for the honour of human intellect, let not men of sound understanding and minds independent partake in the degrading belief, when the fact may, by any one, be ascertained, that, as I have once before stated, the barley of England, yields, in malt and in beer only, more, in the shape of taxes, to the national treasury, than all the commerce put together, and which commerce, were it annihilated, would, as has been clearly proved, leave the present means flowing from it, to flow through other channels, and that, too, unpolluted by the political corruptions now inseparable from them.—The VIIth objection, to wit, *respecting the injury which the country would sustain in the way of supporting its navy*, has been anticipated, and, I think that my correspondents A and Wroc will, by this time, supposing them to have read the last number of the Register from p. 839 to [p. 846 inclusive, be nearly at their ease upon this score. There is, however, an idea of Wroc, at the close of his letter (page 766), which I cannot refrain from noticing. Having laid it down as a maxim, that commerce is the nursery of the navy, he says, “if I even thought, that, abstractedly considered, manufactures and commerce were rather *prejudicial* than of benefit to the country, still should I think it wise to cultivate rather than check their growth, being firmly convinced, that our naval greatness is inseparable from our commerce, and, consequently, that commerce is of vital importance to the country.” I have, at the pages referred to, shewn, that the supply of our navy does not at all depend upon that part of our mercantile marine which is employed in commerce, but, that our home trade, our coasting, and especially our coal trade is the nursery of seamen, not only for the navy, but, for the mercantile marine also, which latter, together with the convoys and ships stationed for the sole purpose of protecting commerce,

cost the lives of many more seamen than are lost in the navy employed in the defence of the country or in attacking the enemy. But, upon a supposition that our coasting trade be not a sufficient nursery for the navy (a supposition which I make merely for the sake of the argument), and that commerce be prejudicial to the country, would it not be as well to nurse up seamen in ships employed for that express and sole purpose? A merchant ship of 500 tons does not contain more than about 17 seamen; but, such a ship of the same size fitted out as a *nursery* ship would very nearly contain two hundred seamen, whom, observe, you would always have at command. It would surely be as well to employ one ship in doing nothing, as ten ships in doing mischief. I am not proposing any such scheme as this; but, if commerce be *prejudicial* in other respects, and this is the case supposed by Wroc, I say that this scheme would be much more rational than that of continuing commerce.—So wedded, however, are men to these opinions about commerce being the nursery of the navy, that my correspondent A. seems to think that even wars, when carried on for commerce, are a great blessing, because, as he supposes, they add to the strength of our navy. “Had commercial wars never existed”, says he, in his 4th paragraph, “we never should have had such a navy as we now have.” To which he might have added, that we should not have had any *occasion* for a navy one third part so large. At this moment all the ships employed upon the American station; in the West Indies; in South America; in the East Indies; at the Cape of Good Hope; at Gibraltar and in the whole of the Mediterranean; together with all the ships employed as convoys, or in waiting for that purpose; all these are devoted to commerce. They contribute not at all to the safety of the country; they cannot be employed to attack the enemy; they are just so much of national expence, without affording the nation any one benefit. If we had no commerce, or but little, what nation, who was foolish enough to be greatly commercial, would be able to withstand us for a moment? We maintained the DOMINION OF THE SEA when we had no commerce, and when our neighbours had much; and why should we not do the like again?—The VIIIth objection relates to the necessity of luxury; and W. F. S. in page 856, expresses his persuasion, that luxury is, in great states, an indispensable law. That it is so, there can be no doubt; for, when the land and labour has produced more food than is necessary to the subsistence of those

who till the land, the superfluous food will naturally and necessarily be used in feeding some of them in making things for convenience; from convenience, the next step is neatness; from neatness and ornament men proceed to what may be called luxury. But, we are not to reckon as luxuries all those things which are not absolutely necessary to the preservation of life and health. Castles and churches and large houses are not luxuries, in the sense in which I use the word. Neither are fine horses and carriages. Neither are many other things which arise from the surplus food of the country. But, the evil of commerce, and of its inevitable accompanying financial operations, is that they assemble men together in large bodies, and shut them up in a narrow compass, in which state their taste and manners become effeminate.—To expend the surplus produce of the earth is necessary; but, it does not follow, that it should be expended in effeminating luxuries. If, for instance, the two or three thousand quarters of corn, which have, this year, been eaten by the Italian singers and their retinue, had been eaten by men employed in the digging of clay, in the making of bricks, and in doing, in short, every thing appertaining to the making of buildings for the silly boobies who have been following those squeaking wretches from cathedral to cathedral, there would have been something produced in return for the corn; we should have something to shew for it; instead of having to reflect, that it had been totally annihilated. The men employed in the buildings would have been better men; and would have constituted part of the national strength; whereas the singers and their crew are not only useless themselves, but spread about at large their contagious effeminacy.—This misapplication of the surplus produce of the country proceeds from commerce; from that intimate connection and almost intermixture with foreign nations, which our extended commerce has produced, and, above all, from the assembling of men together in large bodies, which never fails to enervate the mind and to produce an effeminacy of taste and manners, not to mention the numerous vices, which now disgrace this country, in which, before the *reign* of commerce, they were scarcely known, or known only to be abhorred, though they now excite no particular abhorrence. In London and its vicinity there are, probably, half a million of persons, who are constantly employed in nothing but the *annihilation of the produce of the land*; and, in place of producing any object of national wealth in

return for it, are themselves kept in such a state of effeminacy as to be of no more use in the way of national strength, than so many lap dogs. The surplus produce of the earth must be consumed, or it would cease to be raised; but, the question is, whether it be not better for the nation that it should be consumed by men than that it should be consumed by lap-dogs? whether men be not better than lap-dogs as the population of a state? whether the state be not stronger, better able to defend itself and to attack its enemies, with half a million of men than with half a million of lap-dogs? It is precisely in the same way, that a prodigality in the public expenditure operates against a nation. It creates idlers. It creates *annihilators of corn*. The surplus produce of the land is taken from those who labour, and given to others to maintain themselves without labour. If it were not so taken, it would go to the producing of something in its stead. There would be more, or better cloth; more, or better, houses; and these would be more generally distributed; while the growth of vice, which idleness always engenders and fosters, would be prevented. By the gripe of taxation, every grain of the surplus produce of the country is taken from the lowest class of those who labour; they have the means of *bare existence* left. Of course, their clothing and their dwellings become miserable, their food is bad, or in stinted quantity; that surplus produce which should go to the making of an addition to their meal, and to the creating of things for their use, is *annihilated* by those who do nothing but eat.—Suppose a community to consist of a farmer, four cottagers, a taylor, a shoe-maker, a smith, a carpenter, and a mason, and that the land produces enough food for them all and no more. Suppose this little community to be seized with a design to imitate their betters, and to keep a sinecure placeman, giving him the tenth of their produce, which they formerly gave to the shoe-maker. The consequence would be, that poor Crispin would die, and they would go barefooted, with the consolation of reflecting that they had brought themselves into this state from the silly vanity of keeping an idle man.—But, suppose the land to yield enough food for all ten of them, and enough for two persons besides. They have this, then, besides what is absolutely necessary to supply their wants. They can spare one of their men from the field, and have, besides, food enough to keep him in some other situation. Now, which is best, to make him a second carpenter, who, in return for his food, would give them addition-

al and permanent convenience and comfort in their dwellings; or to make him a sinecure placeman or a singer, in either of which capacities he would be a mere annihilator of corn, at the same time, that, in case of emergency, he would not be half so able to defend the community.—Suppose *two* of the cultivators become sinecure placemen, then you kill the carpenter or some one else, or, what is more likely, all the labouring part of the community, that is to say, all but the sinecure placemen, live more miserably, in dress, in dwellings, and in food.—This reasoning applied to *tens*, applies equally well to *millions*, the causes and effects being, in the latter case, only a little more difficult to trace; and, therefore, though luxury be an inevitable law (if we mean by that word the possession or enjoyment of every thing beyond absolute necessities), the existence of that sort of luxury, which arises from a misapplication of the surplus produce of a country, is an evil that admits of an effectual remedy; and, for the reasons, which I have before given, I am satisfied, that, with us, a remedy would be found in a great diminution of commerce, which has been, and is, the main moral and political corruption, of a wasteful expenditure of the public money, and, of course, of that system of taxation which is without an example in the annals of Europe, and hardly surpassed under the Aumils of Hindostan.—The VIIIth objection, to wit, *respecting the effects of commerce upon the civil and political liberties of England*, I have not left myself room to answer, in a manner proportioned either to the importance of the matter (to which my *motto* applies), or to the respect which I wish to show my correspondent, W. F. S. who so urgently requests me to give him a convincing answer as to this point, and which answer, I shall, I flatter myself, be able to give him in my next.

RUSSIA.—If the “magnanimous Alexander” had not declared war against us, I should have been greatly surprised.—We shall now see what these “no-popery” men are made of.—Will they resist the out-cries of commerce? Or will they make peace upon any terms, rather than risk their places?—They are certainly in an “unsatisfactory state.”—I had almost made a vow, that I never would see St. Stephen’s again; but, curiosity will, I am afraid, take me up to have one more look at them.—It will be curious to hear them asserting, that we can do very well without commerce; for, to that thy must now come, or they must admit the necessity of peace, or, rather, of a

capitulation; for, in this state of things, it cannot be a peace, in the usual sense of that word. But, it is no matter; war or peace, we have now, before it is over, to *change our character*; and the choice lies between real freedom at home, or subjugation from abroad. There will be a desperate struggle to prevent any change at all, but it must and will come.

TYTHES.—In my next I will endeavour to give an answer to my correspondent, in page 851, upon this interesting subject, which answer, as well from respect to my correspondent as from my desire to see maintained all the just rights of the church, I shall render as satisfactory as I am able, regretting, however, that the task had not fallen into more capable hands.

Botley, 3 Dec. 1807.

A. ON “PERISH COMMERCE.”

SIR,—I. As I have for a long time taken in your Register, which I have done for public information; and, as I conceive your reason for the publication is to inform every class of the community their political duties, and, what you consider to be for the public good; such a person as myself ought more particularly to benefit from its doctrines, since you mean to convey to the plainest understandings, public occurrences, public rights, and public reformation in the clearest and most convincing lights.—II. With this view of your patriotism, I venture to send you a letter, to ask, if your approbation of Mr. Spence’s commercial pamphlet be not ironical, and done merely to exercise the humour and “funny” way of writing, your peculiar genius has adopted in your political lucubrations.—What I know of Mr. Spence’s pamphlet is only from your quotation in your last Register, but the result stated, professed to be highly approved by you, is, that “*agriculture is the only source of wealth.*” This position is attempted to be proved by a supposed state of society, wherein the landholder, the farmer, and the manufacturer, in bartering their property and labour for coin, exclude the necessity of the circulating mediums of gold, silver, or paper. That our internal intercourse *might* be regulated by this theory, no one will deny; but, who will doubt, that our *riches, greatness, and our happiness*, would not be *diminished* by such adoption, confining it as it must be, only to an internal intercourse?—III. But if we are under a *necessity* of having foreign connections as commercial ones, the *visionary* fabric of Mr. Spence leaves not a “wreck” behind. I suppose he will not deny our navy is necessary for us, as a protecting bul-

wark, and from whence is its numerous stores to be furnished? Its cordage, sails, and timber? Will a country not wanting your grain or agricultural produce, take it in barter? Or, must not *commercial* operations be adopted to procure those articles? Let commerce be extinguished and see from what source you will man your navy; who ever doubted but the mercantile shipping was the nursery for your seamen? These are a few of the many questions to be answered before Mr. Spence can expect the rational world to be his disciples; and until he can find out substitutes for these things, every one must admit the *necessity* of commerce.—IV. To continue, Will any rational inquirer, Mr. Cobbett, seriously say, that the “riches, greatness, and happiness” of a people depend upon agriculture *only*? Would agriculture ever have brought forward such a place as Manchester? Even you, Mr. Cobbett, I think will not again assert, that the taxes are the *fruit* of land or labour. Is there no *fruit* or revenue raised from the manufacture of cotton at Manchester, paid by the *foreign* consumer. What immense sums have been raised from the European, American, and African markets, from the manufactures of that single place alone! More instances are not necessary, but what article is there sent abroad that the *foreign* consumer does not contribute towards our revenue? If these be facts, the utility of commerce must be admitted, as well as its necessity, unless a sweeping clause comes in in the shape of commercial wars, which has been urged to overbalance commercial benefits. Is there no good from commercial wars? Is such a navy as we have, more than is necessary for our protection? Had commercial wars never existed, would the navy ever have arrived to its present magnitude, and, even in its present powerful state, is it too much to keep our enemies from our shores? Would you not have been a conquered people years ago, had you been confined merely to your “riches and greatness” arising from agriculture?—V. I am sure that Mr. Cobbett will not very readily determine that the “holders of the plough,” and the “workers in the loom,” are not brethren of the same family; and the habits of commerce, and the labours of manufactory have not materially contributed to the “riches, greatness, and happiness” of this country.—I beg to assure you that I am with high regard, Sir, yours, &c.—A.—Nov. 10, 1807.

B. ON “*PERISH COMMERCE.*”

SIR,—I. In your Register of last week,

you loudly praise a Mr. William Spence, who has published a pamphlet, endeavouring to prove that the wealth of Britain is independent of commerce, that no part of it is derived from manufactures, but the whole from agriculture. To promulgate such doctrines at such a period, when our commerce is attacked by a person who well knows its importance, must be of the most pernicious tendency if they are erroneous. At least you will agree with me, that the subject is one of the greatest importance, that our commerce is not hastily to be abandoned, and that as the opinions you profess are calculated for extensive influence they ought not to be adopted without due deliberation. These considerations, I hope your candour will admit as a sufficient apology, for my stating a few arguments in opposition to them.—II. In the first place then, I must contend that agriculture is itself only a species of manufacture, which could not for a moment thrive, or even exist, without other manufactures. There are even some manufactures prior to agriculture; the spade and the plough must be made before the ground is tilled. Nothing can indeed be more absurd than to give one species of manufacture a pre-eminence over another. All human arts are linked and interwoven together; and the improvement of one always keeps pace with that of another. Suppose a certain number of persons to resolve to employ themselves in agriculture, or the manufacture of grain, these persons must either scratch the ground with their nails and go naked, or employ themselves occasionally in other arts. If we conceive them however to have the sagacity to discover, that by employing a certain part of their community exclusively in fabricating clothes, and the instruments of agriculture for the rest, they will derive the advantage of having these necessities manufactured with greater expedition and skill, than by those who are engaged in different avocations; this will immediately lead us to the division of labour and exchange, which are the origin of commerce.—III. Commerce is merely a reciprocation of industry, by which one person gives that portion of the produce of his labour which he does not need, for the superfluity of another person. The cultivator of the ground exchanges with the artisan that quantity of grain which he may have raised more than necessary for the consumption of his own family, for the tools and clothes which he requires. Both are equally dependant upon each other. It is as impossible for the cultivator to do without the implements of agriculture, as for the artisan to

continue his labour without a supply of food.—IV. The industry of the one is always limited by the demands of the other; or, in other words, by the extent of the market. The way to encourage the manufacture of any commodity is to consume it; because nothing is given on one side without an equivalent upon the other. Now, where human talents are not restrained by oppression, the wants of men soon increase, and a compact is formed between the followers of different arts to produce articles of convenience to be exchanged among each other. Industry and necessities increase together, desires and arts are multiplied in exact proportion, and enjoyments, luxury, and wealth, become united and extended. The relations between nations and individuals are the same. Commerce is, in all cases, merely to exchange the productions of industry; and the more extensive the exchange the greater the advantage.—V. So far from agriculture being the sole cause of wealth, it matters little though we did not till a field in Britain. It is industry alone which renders any nation opulent; and did we exercise every other species of manufacture excepting this, the loss of it would be of little importance. National wealth is independent of almost all local advantages; for those who possess commerce can command the productions of every climate and soil, and those who want it are poor in the otherwise most favourable circumstances. The Tyrians were rich on a barren rock, and Smollet informs us, that in his time the peasants of Italy were starving on fields which required only to be scratched to produce crops more than two-fold superior to any in Europe, such is the importance of industry, and such are the magical charms of commerce.—VI. To deprive us of commerce, would be to deprive us of the arts, to extinguish industry, to debase agriculture and every species of manufacture, to degrade human nature, and reduce mankind again to the savage state. This is not, however, the age in which nations can be powerful without riches. Since the invention of gun-powder, warfare has become an expensive employment; and, if naval power and independence are to be preserved, something more must be done than merely to till the ground. I fear much, Mr. Cobbett, were we to renounce our commerce, and exercise no art but agriculture, we would soon have Buonaparté to superintend our farms. This, however, I am sure you did not propose as the result of those speculations which I now oppose; and having already trespassed so long upon your time, I shall conclude by saying that, whatever I

may think of some of your opinions, I believe them, in every case, to be dictated by a sincere regard for the interests of your country, and that your heart is truly English.—B.
Nov. 12, 1807.

C. ON “*PERISH COMMERCE.*”

SIR;—I. The doctrine of Mr. Spence has been attacked by a correspondent under the name of Wroc, in your Register of last week, only to darken the obscurity which formerly surrounded the subject. This writer asks, “how happened it that Mr. Spence overlooked the consideration that the master and journeymen manufacturers, if they had not been employed in building the coach, must notwithstanding *have eaten*, and would, in point of fact, have consumed the same quantity of food?” I answer, if they had done so for *one* year, they would not have done it for *two*, for want of encouragement, the produce of the land would, very soon, be reduced, exhibiting in the appearance of the country, evident signs of decay, and the “drone” would soon be found to have starved. To have eaten without producing something in return, would have been attended with a *diminution* of the wealth of the country; as on the contrary, the conversion of the corn into the coach, by means of the manufacturer, cannot be called a *creation*, but a *transfer*. But this transfer is made from a perishable to a less perishable commodity; and like the produce of the labour of the builder, the carpenter, and the smith, certainly forms one of the objects, by the presence or absence of which the wealth and prosperity, or the poverty of a nation is ascertained.—II. The argument, drawn from Wroc’s assumption of the population of a country consisting of 100,000 persons, partly employed in agriculture, and partly not so employed, is equally liable to objection; for, if on his supposition, the produce of the soil should be so much greater than the consumption of the inhabitants, as to enable them to export a part, it is evident that the specie or whatever else the return may consist of, is nothing other than a *direct transfer* from such corn, and what is gained in specie is lost in corn. His two other arguments, from a deficiency of corn, and just as much of the necessary article as is sufficient for the maintenance of the population, require no answer after what has above been said.—III. Now, Mr. Cobbett, although these observations go entirely against Mr. Wroc, it does not follow, that I am perfectly satisfied with all that Mr. Spence has advanced with regard to the effect of commerce on the wealth of a

country; and to convince him of the fallacy of his reasonings, I think I have only to place him in the coach, which he supposes the coach-maker has made for the land-owner, while I am permitted to drive one by his side, purchased by the merchant. The simple case will stand thus. While he rattles about town, and by the dash and elegance of his carriage, excites the curiosity of the stranger, who cries out, “what a country for wealth and luxury.” I have mine packed up, and sent abroad, and sold to the best purchaser, giving directions that the dollars it produced should be applied in the purchase of teas, wines, sugars, &c. to be returned to me as soon as possible. Upon their arrival, I find I can dispose of them to the land proprietor for 80 quarters of corn, leaving in my possession 20 quarters after paying 60, the original cost of the coach. Ten of these I apply for the support of my family, and with the other 10 quarters, I build a house, or apply them to some other of those objects which constitute what is esteemed national wealth. The coach-maker finds his capital increased 20 quarters by his profits on the making of 2 coaches, 10 of which he applies in the same manner as the merchant, to the support of his family, and the other 10 in houses, or in furniture. Can it be said, that the savings of our labour, applied in houses, &c. are less objects of wealth to a country, than similar houses, &c. erected by the land proprietor, from the produce of his land exceeding his expenses? True it is, that the manufacturer, without commerce, cannot be said to have created any wealth to the community; since, although the house which he built is his own, it might have been built by the land owner, if he had been so economical as to make his old carriage last another year. But the same cannot be said of the merchant. He buys from the manufacturer what only cost to the country 50 quarters in making, he returns to the country 80 quarters, or what is the same thing, articles for which we should pay 80 quarters of grain to a foreigner. It is, therefore, evident that 30 quarters is gained to the country, deducting such a quantity of food as is necessary to support himself and the manufacturer, which are not included in the first cost of 50 quarters.—IV. The fact is, Mr. Cobbett, in a country without commerce, the only use that the manufacturer can be of is, to convert the surplus produce of the land, after feeding the persons employed in the growing thereof into articles of necessity or luxury; and if by the effects of his industry, he should be

able to get more into his possession than is requisite for his support, this has the same effect as if it remained in the hands of the land proprietor, as certainly the country would be neither richer nor poorer, to whichever of the two it belonged; and, therefore, it appears that in a country where there is no foreign commerce, agriculture alone, is the source of wealth; and that any additional value which the manufacturer may give to corn by converting it into other commodities is merely of a *relative* nature; and cannot be said to make a country more wealthy.—V. It is evident that the country must be most wealthy (or in the road to the greatest wealth if newly cultivated) which in the smallest extent, and with the fewest hands employed in agriculture, produces the greatest quantity of grain. In such a country, when fostered by a liberal government, the number of manufactures is increased, the mechanic arts arrive at the greatest state of perfection; and the surplus produce of the land, is seen to rise in the elegance and conveniency of our houses, furniture, and apparel, when every field is a garden, and every country seat a palace; and when the common people are well clothed and fed. But the *relative* value before mentioned, becomes *real* value the moment commerce is introduced, for, according to the example of the coach before mentioned, the 50 quarters of grain is converted into 80; or, in other words the merchant and manufacturer acquire a property which they would never have possessed, nor the country reaped the advantage of, had it not been for this transaction. Manufacturers, therefore, are, unquestionably, the means of wealth in a country where foreign commerce exists. It may be stated, as an objection to this argument, that the intrinsic value of the articles imported, and given in exchange to the land proprietor for his 80 quarters of grain, does not exceed the 50 quarters originally expended in making the machine, but there can be no foundation for such an objection when we see that we certainly should have paid 80 quarters to any foreigner who brought the same articles for sale; and further—that the 30 quarters may be applied, as soon as it is received, in the buildings or ornaments which form the wealth of the country, without any one receiving the least injury from such application.—VI. Thus, Mr. Cobbett, it appears, that manufactures without commerce, cannot be said to constitute national wealth, but only to give the produce of agricultural industry a more permanent form—that foreign commerce promotes the wealth of a country.

through its manufacturers and merchants, who reap a profit, and add to that stock, which has always been considered a proof of prosperity.—VII. I purposely avoid mentioning the other advantages of commerce in the view of national security, from its affording employment for ships, and keeping up the necessary supplies for that navy, which is considered the safeguard of our independence and happiness. The *security* of nations, being different from their wealth, I shall not imitate Mr. Wroc in his patriotic conclusion, but reserve a word or two, with your permission, for some future opportunity, when I may furnish you with some reflections upon certain subjects, which you, yourself, have brought to the attention of the public.—Meanwhile, I remain, your constant reader,—C.—Nov. 18, 1807.

IRISH TYTHES.

SIR ;—I have seldom seen so much calm mistatement, and so large a portion of bad logic as pervades the whole of your observations upon the article which you have quoted from the Morning Chronicle respecting county meetings in Ireland, in your Register of the 14th instant.—You say “ I admire the patriotism which the sage of the Morning Chronicle has discovered in the Irish Protestant gentlemen.” Now the word patriotism, does not occur in the whole article, nor is the idea of it applied to the Irish Protestant gentlemen. If the words “ liberality and good sense of the Protestant gentlemen of Ireland,” were construed by you into patriotism, you were mistaken, these words were applied because the Irish Protestant gentlemen are with very few exceptions friends to the claims of the Catholics, and have adopted these Petitions for a Commutation of Tythes, as the most agreeable measure to the Catholics which there is a chance of pressing with success.—If “ praise undeserved is satire in disguise,” to attribute patriotism to the Irish Protestant gentlemen would be almost as good a joke as to talk of your suavity, Mr. Cobbett.—You next say, in the same strain of error, that these Irish Protestant gentlemen are endeavouring to take a part of the amount of the tythes out of the pockets of the parsons to put it in their own. How you, Mr. Cobbett, who are attentive to the meaning of words, could have made this charge, after having stated in the first sentence of your observations, that the article in the Morning Chronicle “ announces to us the fact, that the Protestant gentlemen of Ireland, are for a *commutation* of tythes,” and commutation in italics too, I am at a loss to discover. For, if the word commutation means any thing, it

means such a measure as will give the parsons the whole benefit of tythes, but in a less vexatious and exceptionable manner. If any thing is produced by the change, if by the removal of moral oppression, land will acquire an encrease of produce over and above the fair and customary profits of the farmer, it will and ought to belong to the landlord. It is *not* taken from the pocket of the parsons, because it never could have been raised under the system of tythes. You take from the parsons only their power of oppressing and you convert it into good substantial corn and hay.—So much for your mistatements, Mr. Cobbett, let us now examine your logic. You ask this question: “ will the poor man who cultivates five acres of ground, yield less in tythes than he does now ?” and you answer it by saying, “ that if he does give less to the parson, it is to me at least quite certain, that he will give more to the landowner or land jobber, so that this commutation, whatever may be the effect of it to the landowner and the parson, will, in no degree whatever, lighten the burdens of the potatoe planter.” The fallacy of this reasoning, like that of your friend Pitt on the sinking fund, lies just beneath the surface. Let the landlord, year after year, value his rent *after* the crop of potatoes is grown as the parson does his tythes, and then your reasoning would be correct. But so long as it continues to be the practice of landlords, to settle with their tenants for the rent of land *before* they take possession, and (as is particularly the case in Ireland) to give such leases as leaves the tenants to the increased produce that may arise from an increased industry ; while the parsons value their tythes *after* the tenant has tilled, manured, and sown his land, and the crop is come to maturity ; so long will the circumstances on which rent is calculated be so very different from those on which tythes are taken, that the tenant will always prefer and find his advantages in commuting tythes for rent.—“ But, did I myself not propose to do something respecting the tythes in Ireland ?” This ejaculation of yours is very explanatory. So, Mr. Cobbett, all your anger against the Irish Protestant gentlemen is excited by their presumption in recommending a simple commutation of tythes, in neglect of a favourite plan of your own.—I have now, Sir, said enough to put both your candour and your talents to the test—Your candour by giving you an opportunity of publishing this letter, and your talents, by making it no easy matter to answer it.—AN IRISH PROTESTANT GENTLEMAN. — Dublin, Nov. 20, 1807.

MR. WILBERFORCE AND THE MOLUNGEEES.

SIR;—From the volumes which have for years made their appearance on the subject of the slave trade, and the strenuous efforts made by the most conspicuous members of both houses of parliament, in favour of its abolition, it might have been supposed that the Negroes were the only aggrieved subjects under the British domination; or, that their wrongs were so much superior to those of others, as to silence every other complaint, and eclipse every other misery. I pass over the Irish peasantry for the present, certain *Protestant gentlemen* having in their great wisdom, discovered a panacea for all their sufferings, in the *abolition of tithes*. This single measure, unaided on the part of the Protestant country gentlemen, by any diminution in the price of land, which both the Protestant and Roman Catholic gentry seem to vie with one another in enhancing, is to work like a miracle to the comforts of the poor; immediately after the tithes are abolished, and the rent proportionably increased by these wonder-working landlords, the labourer is to be clothed in a supernatural suit of warm frieze, his children are to be inspired with the elements of religion and morality, and his hut, like the hovel of Baucis and Philemon, is to grow into a comfortable habitation. Such are the wonders to be performed by the Protestant country gentlemen; and so for the present I leave them in possession of their wands and their talismans, looking upon them to be the most accomplished conjurors, (since the lamented death of Doctor Katerfelto) that have ever astonished the world.—The sufferers to whom just now I wish to draw your attention are the Molungees (Salt Makers), employed by the *Honourable East India Company*, in the manufacture of salt, of which the Company have the monopoly. A large proportion of the salt made in Bengal is manufactured by these Hindoos, in deserts overflowed every tide by the sea; and the climate of these deserts is inimical to every constitution; all the complaints occasioned by heat and moisture, appear there in their most malignant form. Dysenteries at one season are particularly fatal; the unhappy victims of this disorder are avoided as infectious by their companions, and suffered to pine without receiving either that aid or consolation which compassion usually pays to the wretched; the progress of this disorder in such circumstances leads to certain death, if that event be not anticipated by the tigers and alligators, by which these dreary wastes are infested. The tigers accustomed to human blood, boldly attack the salters, while the alligators are always ready to assail each unfortunate individual

who may stray away from his companions. These are not the only evils to which the Molungees are exposed, their unhealthy and dangerous employment carries them to a distance from their families, where their provision, and even water, is supplied by a long carriage; from choice, therefore, a native will not engage as a salter, and this circumstance occasions a species of slavery to be established in this manufactory, which has yet received neither remedy nor alleviation.—Whoever has once laboured at the salt works, is bound himself and his posterity, ever after, to continue in that occupation. From the great mortality incident to their employment, the salters do not keep up their numbers, but the annual waste is continually supplied by unjustifiable artifices in procuring fresh recruits. Labourers are either *decoyed* to those works by false representations, or they are *compelled* on alleged proof of their profession to engage in them; this proof, it is said, frequently consists of perjured evidence, which is never difficult to obtain, especially in India.—Such is the situation of these miserable Hindoos, and yet the salt revenue is so considerable that the trade cannot be laid aside, nor can an article of living so necessary be abandoned; the annual sales by the Company amount to one million sterling; and the net revenue after deducting charges has been so considerable, that no adequate compensation to the *Honourable Company* for so important a sacrifice can easily be found. “Hence,” says Tennant, * “the unfortunate Molungees continue in the most wretched of all slavery.”—Here, then, are a race of unfortunate wretches, whose fate compared to that of the Negroe slaves in the West Indies, sinks incalculably in the scale of human wretchedness. The employment of the Negro is by no means hostile to health, nor creative of disease; he is not liable to be devoured by beasts of prey, and when he is sick he has medical care and attendance. The climate that he serves in is superior to his own, and the manufacture of sugar in which he is chiefly engaged, furnishes him for three months of the year with food, the most nutritious and wholesome that the earth produces. I shall not draw a parallel between the situation of the Molungee and the Irish peasant. It is an easy, but might be deemed by the “jacobin and leveller” manufacturers, an invidious task; they are both certainly liable to the extremes of heat and moisture; the one in the fields at their labour, and the other during their repose in

* Indian Recreations, Vol. 2. page 330.
See Bryan Edwards's account of Jamaica

their hovels, and the consequences are pretty much the same, dysentery, ague, and consumption, and that anticipated old age produced by the causes already stated, super-added to bad food, smoke, filth, and despair, which changes as beautiful a race of people as ever originally came from the hands of the Creator, (particularly the females) into skinny, sallow, and withered invalids in the prime of their existence, when youth should give them spirits, and vigour, activity.—I join the name of *Wilberforce* especially with the *Molungees*, because he has already stood forth the champion of a much less aggrieved class of human beings, and may therefore, be the more inclined to exert his talents and his influence in behalf of these wretched outcasts. Great praise is certainly due to him for his labours in behalf of the Negroes, though they will terminate in the loss to Great Britain of the West India colonies, while a doubt may still remain on the minds of many, as it does on mine, whether the same good to Africa and a less evil to England might not have been produced by a new modelling of the colonial code and making the condition of the blacks so much more advantageous, by assimilating it as closely as possible in point of civil rights, to that of the British, that compulsion would have been no longer necessary, and the Africans would have emigrated to Jamaica from motives of self interest, as the Irish and Scotch do from the United Kingdoms to America,—But the motive of the abolitionists was "*fiat justitia, ruat cælum*;" and such a sentiment is too apt to be accompanied with a degree of virtuous but imprudent enthusiasm that passes over remedies which to cooler and less expanded minds seem perfectly adequate.—But it is no longer time to investigate those measures which led to the abolition of the Slave Trade—it has received the sanction of the legislature, and the fate of the Africans, as far as that measure and its consequences reach, is decided—it is the cause of the *Molungees* which I now wish to advocate:—it is the misery of this miserable class that I wish investigated and redressed. Whether it will ever be discussed in Parliament remains to be seen—at least it deserves discussion as well as any of the enormities attributed to Lord Wellesley, and throws as deep a stigma on the British Domination in India:—it will at all events if you think it expedient to publish this letter in your Register, acquire in the course of the well deserved and extensive circulation that Register has obtained, a considerable share of publicity—and this is all I want—for I will not think that the commercial gangrene has so completely rotted and mortified the British heart

as to render it insensible to such misery as falls to the hard lot of the *Molungees*—I am, Sir, &c. MALB.—Ireland, Nov. 23d, 1807.

PUBLIC PAPER.

RUSSIA AND ENGLAND.—*Declaration of Russia against England. Done at St. Petersburg, October 26, 1807.*

The higher the value in which the Emperor held the amity of his Britannic Majesty, the keener the regret he must feel at the complete alienation of that monarch.—Twice has the Emperor taken up arms in a cause in which the interests of England were most immediately concerned: but he has solicited to no purpose her co-operation to promote the accomplishment of her own objects. He did not require she should unite her forces with his: he was anxious only she would make a diversion in their favour. He was astonished that in the furtherance of her own cause she herself would make no exertion. On the contrary, she looked on a cold spectatrix of the sanguinary theatre of the war, which she had herself kindled, and sent a part of her troops to attack Buenos Ayres. Another portion of her army, which seemed to be destined to make a diversion in Italy, finally withdrew from Sicily where it was assembled. Hopes were entertained that they had taken that step, in order to throw themselves on the Neapolitan coast; but it was soon understood that they were employed in taking possession of Egypt.—But what most sensibly hurt the feelings of his Imperial Majesty was, to see that in violation of the faith and express stipulations of treaties, England was annoying the maritime trade of his subjects; and at what period was this proceeding adopted? when the blood of the Russians was flowing in the glorious battles which accumulated and directed against the armies of his Imperial Majesty, the whole of the military force of his Majesty the Emperor of the French, with whom England was, and still is, at war! When the two Emperors made peace, his Majesty, notwithstanding his just causes of displeasure at the conduct of England, did not however refrain from endeavouring to render her services. The Emperor stipulated in that very treaty that he should interpose his mediation between England and France; and he accordingly made an offer of that mediation to the King of Great Britain, apprising him that it was with a wish to obtain honourable conditions for him. But the British ministry, adhering no doubt to the plan that was to dissolve and break off all the ties between Russia and England, rejected that mediation.—The peace between Russia and France

was likely to bring about a general peace, but it was at this moment that England suddenly awoke from that apparent lethargy in which she had slumbered; but it was only to throw into the north fresh fire-brands, which were to rekindle, and have actually kindled, the flames of a war which she was desirous not to see extinguished.—Her fleets, her troops, appeared on the Danish Coasts, to execute an act of violence of which history so fruitful in examples, records no parallel.—A power distinguished for its peaceful and moderate conduct, and for a long and unexpected course of wise neutrality, and who sustained, amidst surrounding monarchies, a kind of moral dignity, finds itself treated as if it was engaged in secret plots, and was meditating the downfall of England: while the whole of these imputations were only meant to justify the sudden and entire spoliation of that power.—The Emperor, wounded in his dignity, wounded in the affection he feels for his people, wounded in his engagements with the courts of the North, by this act of violence committed in the Baltic, a close sea, the tranquillity of which has so long depended on the court of St. James's, and is reciprocally guaranteed by both powers, did not dissemble his resentment against England, and warned her that he should not remain indifferent to such a proceeding.—His Majesty did not foresee, that while England, having successfully employed her forces, was on the point of seizing on her prey, she would offer a fresh outrage to Denmark, in which his Majesty was to bear a part.—New propositions, still more insidious than those made at first, were made to Denmark, which aimed at binding down to England that power thus subjugated, degraded, and applauding, as it were, every thing that had happened.—Still less did the Emperor foresee that it would be proposed to him to guarantee that submission, and to promise that that act of violence should not be attended with any mischievous consequence to England.—The English ambassador seems to have imagined that he might venture to propose to the Minister of the Emperor, that his Imperial Majesty should undertake the apology and defence of a proceeding which his Majesty had so openly condemned. To this step on the part of the cabinet of St. James's, his Majesty has thought proper to pay only that attention which it deserved, and has deemed it high time to set limits to his moderation.—The Prince Royal of Denmark endowed with a character full of nobleness and energy, and having been blessed by Providence with a soul as elevated as his rank,

had apprized the Emperor, that, justly enraged against what had recently happened at Copenhagen, he had not ratified the convention respecting it, and that he considered it as null and void.—That Prince has just now acquainted his Majesty with the new propositions that have been made to him, and which are of a nature rather to provoke his resistance than to appease his resentment, for they tend to stamp on his actions the seal of degradation, the impress of which they never will exhibit.—The Emperor struck with the confidence which the Prince Royal placed in him, having moreover considered his own grounds of dissatisfaction with England, having attended to his engagements with the powers of the North, engagements entered into by the Empress Catherine, and by his late Imperial Majesty, both of glorious memory, has resolved upon fulfilling them.—His Imperial Majesty breaks off all communication with England: he recalls his embassy from that court, and will not allow any ambassador from her to continue at his court. There shall henceforward exist no relations between the two countries. The Emperor declares that he abrogates for ever every act hitherto concluded between Great Britain and Russia, and particularly the convention concluded in 1801. He proclaims anew the principles of the armed neutrality, that monument of the wisdom of the Empress Catherine, and binds himself never to recede from that system.—He calls upon England to give complete satisfaction to his subjects, with respect to all the just claims they may set up, of ships and merchandises seized and detained, contrary to the express tenor of the treaties concluded during his own reign. The Emperor gives warning, that nothing shall be re-established between Russia and England, until the latter shall have given satisfaction to Denmark.—The Emperor expects, that his Britannic Majesty, instead of permitting his Ministers to scatter fresh seeds of war, in compliance only with his own feelings, will be induced to conclude a peace with his Majesty the Emperor of the French, which would be extending, in a manner, to the whole world, the inestimable blessings of peace.—When the Emperor shall be satisfied upon all these points, and especially upon that of a peace between France and England, without which no part of Europe can expect to enjoy any real tranquillity, his Imperial Majesty will then willingly return to the relations of amity with Great Britain, which in the state of just resentment which the Emperor should feel he has maintained, perhaps, too long.